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Canadian POETRY MAGAZINE



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VOLUME 9

No. 2 — December, 1945

An official publication of
THE CANADIAN AUTHORS' ASSOCIATION

Canadian Poetry Magazine

A quarterly magazine, issued under the auspices of The Canadian Authors' Association, for the encouragement and development of Canadian verse.

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FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

The Canadian Authors' Association established the Canadian Poetry Magazine to stimulate the production of fine verse in Canada. The publication of the preceding eight volumes was largely made possible through the generosity of Foundation Supporters, whose gifts supplemented the Magazine's receipts from subscriptions and advertisements.

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QUARTERLY PRIZES FOR POEMS

THE CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE is not in a position to pay contributions for poems published. In lieu of such payment, the Advisory Council on Awards decides upon the three best poems in each number; and the authors are given small cash prizes. The three next best receive Honourable Mention.

The Editors do not wish to consider for publication any verse that has already been printed elsewhere.

PRIZES FOR POEMS IN THE SEPTEMBER NUMBER

First Prize for *A Sequence*, by Lucy Betty McRaye.

Second Prize for *Revenant*, by Ethel Kirk Grayson.

Third Prize for *Such Loveliness as this*, by Marjorie Freeman Campbell.

HONOURABLE MENTION

Pay Day in Coal Town, by Magdalena Roskevich.

To a Brother at War, by Elizabeth K. Campbell.

The Exile, by Pauline Howard.

LIBRARIES SHOULD BE SUBSCRIBERS

Any reader who is a member of a poetry group, or of any society interested in the development of Canadian Literature, would be doing a favour, both to that group and to the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, by taking this copy to its next meeting, and showing it to the members. Perhaps the reader would also suggest to the Librarian of the local library that the library should become a subscriber. It is in these ways that the people who would be interested in this publication will become aware of its existence.

Time and again a new subscriber will write "I have needed this Magazine for years," or, "I didn't know we had anything like this in Canada."

Please show this copy to your friends.

"You must try to keep the Canadian Poetry Magazine going, for it is one of the best things we have."—Lord Tweedsmuir (John Buchan).

Canadian POETRY MAGAZINE

VOL. 9, No. 2.

DECEMBER, 1945

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EDITORIAL NOTE

TO THE RETURNING:

All who are familiar with the history of this Magazine will join with its staff in the near future in welcoming back to Canada one of its staunchest friends and supporters, Dr. J. Markowitz of Toronto, who has spent the last four years as a prisoner-of-war in Japanese hands.

EDITORIAL

PATTERNS IN NARRATIVE VERSE

There are manifest advantages for the Canadian poet in having at his back some fifteen centuries of English prosody. The quality and texture of the language have been indefatigably tested and worked over by generation after generation of highly gifted artists in verse; and the results of their experimentation are freely accessible to those who will take the study of verse technique seriously and will make themselves familiar with the fundamental principles discovered, to date, by the best artistic brains of the Anglo-Saxon race. To try to discover it all over again by oneself, the hard way, would be as great folly as for an individual law student to try to excogitate a whole new system of jurisprudence all by himself, without reference to the past; while to confine one's whole attention to some new school of prosodic experimentation is like trying to revolutionize mathematics without even learning the multiplication table. There is

much to be said in favour of having every would-be poet fill at least ten note-books with apprentice work in both traditional and contemporary modes, and then burn the lot, before venturing on work for publication. The would-be composer does not rush into print with his first amateurish bit of improvisation, nor does the would-be painter expect to have his first class-room sketches exhibited to an admiring public. It might be similarly salutary if the first 5,000 lines written by every young poet were resolutely destroyed and "written off" by him as immature pupil exercises. He would then approach serious writing with a fuller comprehension of the possibilities of the language and the respective functions of different types of verse.

The choice of a pattern for narrative verse, for example, would then be made with a wise weighing of means and ends. Many forms have been used: classic hexameters, blank verse, heroic couplets, Spenserians, ballad-measure, *Hiawatha*-measure, terza rima, octosyllabic couplets, free verse, ottava rima, rime royal, and heroic quatrains. But your sophisticated poet will know that classic hexameters, in spite of the efforts of Kingsley, Clough and Longfellow, will not acclimatize themselves in English; that terza rima, even in the hands of Shelley, is never quite at home, perhaps through a paucity of feminine rhymes; that the eternal trochees of the *Hiawatha*-measure grow intolerably dull in a language naturally iambic; that rime royal has rarely succeeded since Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, (although one must not forget *Dauber*); that free verse is too amorphous for narrative and bogs down into prose; and that "heroic stanzas," so highly praised by Dryden, usually break the narrative flow with a resounding thump at the end of each quatrain.

Ballad measure, in its original folk poetry form, is today largely an archaism; but two expanded forms have had a popular vogue during the past 150 years. One of these, as used by Coleridge and Macaulay, augments the stanza from time to time by increasing the number of lines:

*Four hundred trumpets sounded
A peal of warlike glee,
As that great host, with measured tread,
And spears advanced, and ensigns spread,
Rolled slowly towards the bridge's head,
Where stood the dauntless Three.*

The other expanded form, much favored by Kipling and his imitators, turns many of the iambs of the original pattern into anapaests. Printed, however, according to the underlying scheme, the character of the stanza is obvious:

*There was rock to the left and rock to the right,
And low lean thorn between,
And thrice he heard a breech-bolt snick
Though never a man was seen.*

Both of these types are *vieux jeu* and utterly condemned by arty circles; yet it may be that their unpretentious application to themes from the Canadian frontier or the Canadian steel-plant would occasionally strike out a really memorable yarn in verse, vastly superior to gobbets of bilious introspection on a fake channel crossing to Proletaria.

It is a little strange that Spenserians and ottava rima, both used with effective zest by a poet like Byron, have been so little tried in Canadian verse. It may be that Byron and Shelley found little place in Canadian schools in the 19th century; or that stanzas of such dimensions were felt to be too formidable. Each type has, however, striking merits, though of profoundly different kinds: the Spenserian, with its unity of subtly interwoven rhymes and the lingering sweetness of its final Alexandrine, is ideal for leisurely episodes, rich in sensuous description, while the ottava rima, with its neat sestet of two alternating rhymes, rounded smartly off by a closing couplet, is admirable for satire. A typical example of the former may be drawn from Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes":

*And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanchèd linen smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap*

*Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd,
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spicèd dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.*

Over against this may be set the sparkling ribaldry of Byron's "The Vision of Judgment":

*The angels all were singing out of tune,
And hoarse with having little else to do,
Excepting to wind up the sun and moon,
Or curb a runaway young star or two,
Or wild colt of a comet, which too soon
Broke out of bounds o'er the ethereal blue,
Splitting some planet with its playful tail,
As boats are sometimes by a wanton whale.*

Three common narrative forms remain: the octosyllabic couplet, the heroic couplet, and blank verse, each with its own merits and its own limitations, calling for careful scrutiny as to suitability in any given case. The first is, of course, a homogenized rhymed descendant of the original four-stressed Anglo-Saxon line, but its reduction to comparatively rigid iambs has tamed it, shortened it, and made it more rapid. It is admirable for swift narratives of a few hundred lines, especially if varied by crossed rhymes, but it is too short of breath for a longer work. It is ideal for a tabloid epic like E. J. Pratt's "Cachalot", but would not have served for "Brébeuf and his Brethren". The heroic couplet, moreover, while its iambic pentameter line comes closest to supplying the normal breath-unit for modern English, has nevertheless proved, through the centuries, to be monotonous for long narratives if used in its strict closed form, and more modern poets have fallen back on frequent enjambement, like John G. Neihardt in his "Song of the Indian Wars", or on frequent crossing and interlacing of rhymes, like E. J. Pratt in "Titanic".

The following is a specimen from Neihardt:

*He charged the island where the rifles brawled.
And some who galloped nearest him recalled
In after days, what some may choose to doubt,
How suddenly the hubbuboo went out
In silence, and a wild white brilliance broke
About him, and the cloud of battle smoke
Was thronged with faces not of living men.
Then terribly the battle roared again.*

Pratt's method is equally clear, and employs run-on lines as well as rhyme-variation:

*Calved from a glacier near Godhaven coast,
It left the fiord for the sea — a host
Of white flotillas gathering in its wake,
And joined by fragments from a Behring floe,
Had circumnavigated it to make
It centre of an archipelago.*

As for blank verse — the easiest of metres to write badly and the most subtle in modulation in the hands of a master — its possibilities for rich variety in unity are almost infinite. With an underlying basic rhythm to give it emotional integration, it can nevertheless be altered incalculably in tempo and in tone. Its chief handicap in our time is the widespread loss of the practice of reading poetry aloud, for it is only by the ear that the full orchestration of great blank verse can be appreciated. The current mutilated reading of verse by the eye alone may help to account for certain imagist heresies. On the other hand, an extended use of the radio for poetry may reawaken human awareness of the delight of "apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out."

The foregoing remarks on pattern have been confined to narrative verse, and have fallen far short of exhausting the major phases of the problem. They are offered only in the hope of encouraging Canadian poets to choose their patterns with skilful care and not by accident or caprice. —W. K.

POEMS

WHEN SKIES ARE CLEAR

(Chant Royal)

The goodly winds of heaven soon shall clear
The smoke of battle from the alien sky,
On land and sea the waiting world shall hear
The stirring notes of our triumphant cry.
While liquid chimes from ancient fanes attune
With temple bells from tawny desert dune.
The sea shall echo back the full refrain
To waving wheat on our vast prairie plain—
And none shall hear the feeble monotone
From those who know the measure of dull pain,
“I asked for bread, you offered me a stone!”

These were the conquered, they who would not veer
From Truth, nor by allegiance sanctify
The ruthless creed that had its birth in fear
And knew no language save a pagan lie.
The bold defeated, whose reluctant noon
Of gracious life gave way to night too soon—
A night made lurid by the crimson stain
Of fiery horsemen trumpeting war's reign.
Defeated, yes, but never overthrown—
The great forgotten in the festive train—
“I asked for bread, you offered me a stone!”

There were the pale dark daughters of austere
Grave fathers, mindful not to vilify
The Faith of Judah by an insincere
Salute to one who dared their God outvie.
Those Hebrew women who refused to croon
The heathen anthem of a mad buffoon—
But rather chose to face the hurricane
Of brutal gods who killed for lustful gain.

Shall fair young hearts who owned one God alone
Rebuke us from the silent grave in vain?
"I asked for bread, you offered me a stone!"

The eloquence of statesmen will not sear
War's naked wounds, nor may one torrefy
The solemn lines of gifted sonneteer
To make a salve for griefs that cannot die.
The silver crescent shall become full moon
And live its finite hour in sweet attune
With long cool valleys rich with golden grain
That ripens as the mellow light-beams wane.
But words that have no source of truth are shown
As faulty links in Life's encircling chain—
"I asked for bread, you offered me a stone!"

There will be words and promises and sheer
Wild ecstasies that will not justify
The feeble virtue that is but veneer
To cover ills that man would fain deny.
The world should now forever be immune
From fallacies that start with one clear rune
That simple children learn, then with urbane
And diabolic strength force all humane
Impulsions from their constituted throne.
The antiphon lies with the gallant slain—
"I asked for bread, you offered me a stone!"

ENVOI

Triumphant people of our own domain,
When triumphs melt as heated cellophane
Dissolves itself—within a certain zone
Of the eternal law lives this refrain—
"I asked for bread, you offered me a stone!"

—*Evelyn Bamborough.*

STAR OF THE NORTH

Now breaks the dawn, beloved land of mine,
And every wind is heralding your name;
The rivers answer, and the crested pine
Chants tenderly the saga of your fame.
The starry dayspring of your destiny,
For which your patriot children waited long,
Is bright upon your hills from sea to sea,
Brimming your valleys with a matin-song.
How fair, my country, now
The sunrise on your brow!

Here April comes with swift, renascent showers,
Calling the sharded seedlings from their bed;
Here summer fashions through the chiming hours
Wheat tassels, corn-silk, and the cloverhead.
When autumn shepherds home her drowsy brood,
The maple flames in glory near and far:
Each scarlet talisman will bind a snood
On snow's outriders of the Northern Star.
Beauty is not betrayed
By leafless height or glade.

O mighty mother-heart, whose valiant sons
Are shouldering horror from the savaged earth,
When cold and silent are the retching guns
And time-enduring peace has hallowed birth,
Teach them anew the kinship of your ways:
The Sabbath healing of your solitudes,
The lyric voice of streams, the rainbow haze
Of lake and waterfall and friendly woods.
O cherish them again
Who walked with death and pain!

For those who forfeit dream and heritage,
The unreturning, the forever young,
Build for their recompense a nobler age,
For brotherhood and truth build rung on rung.
The song of youth was hushed upon their lips,
They saw with wonder the eternal Gleam,
Their day was ended as an arrow dips;
But where they sojourn God is Youth and Dream.
Gentle His love and deep
Who gives them quiet sleep.

Dear land of mine, across a shattered world,
Seeking the open gateways of the west,
Bewildered, broken, flag of courage furled,
The homeless peoples come to you, the blest.
Your vast horizons charm their brooding eyes,
Their hearts unlearn the language of despair;
Your mountains, plains, the splendor of your skies
Erase the memory of scourge and lair.
Secure from hate and fear
They raise their altars here.

—*Kathryn Munro*

THE PIPER

A melody hauntingly rare
He played on his magic pipe,
As light and free as the scented air
On the hills where the fruits hung ripe.
Dreamy and soft and slow,
In murmurous underflow,
The rhythmic tide swept far and wide,
As far as a song may go.

In the heart of the shadowy wood,
Whence never her feet had strayed,
Raptured, the maiden listened and stood,
Till she trembled and grew afraid—
Afraid of the strange new thing
She heard the piper sing,
And the frost and fire of her wild desire
To follow his beckoning.

Musing, the minstrel smiled,
Then blew on his pipe once more,
A song more passionate, pleading, wild,
Than he ever had played before—
Thrillingly, piercingly sweet,
Beauty in every beat—
Till she yielded at last and forward passed,
Forward without retreat.

(Fair is the piper's land
On the shore of the mystic sea.
The wild flowers blossom on every hand
And the birds sing endlessly,
But oh! there are heights so steep
And glens so lonely and deep,
If far you stray you may lose your way,
And find but the Gate of Sleep.)

From dusk till the gray-green dawn
He piped, and she followed him.
She journeyed on, and on, and on,
Through the forest weird and dim.
Fainter the music grew,
And the winds were damp with dew;
It was late, so late, when she reached the gate
And passed, like a phantom, through.

On the bank of a lilled stream,
Bewildered, she sat her down.
Was it real, or only a strange, sad dream?
Where had the piper flown?
There was only an echoed note
Of his song on the winds afloat.
She prayed heaven's grace for a sight of his face,
Stifling the sob in her throat.

"Love's Land is a lonely strand,
But oh, how fair!" she sighed.
"How wide soever the gate may stand,
Here only will I abide."
Ere the breath of that sigh had passed
She caught his song on the blast;
She heard the beat of his sandalled feet,
And knew he was near at last.

He came to woo and to win
In the dawning daffodil light.
He opened his heart and took her in:
And the Garden of Love's Delight
Out-broke into roseate flower,
A precious, a priceless dower;
And fairy things with glamorous wings
Sang in their bridal hour.

—*Lilian Leveridge*

NOW IS THE TIME OF TOADSTOOLS

Autumn is in the woods
And mists hang softly in the narrow aisles.
Now is the time of toadstools,—
Fawn; mouse-gray,
Brown-lacquered; yellow and orange; gay
Gold-bronze and scarlet Milky Caps,
Sinister Morels black as witches' hats,
Tatterdemalion Shaggy Manes;
Cloudy Clitocybe,—Oh, lovely name!
As if a constellation earthward came to rest,
Starring the silent woods
Where cold Death Angels spread their pallid hoods.
Mushrooms like moonstones scatter through the grass,
Smoke from the brushpiles, drifting, passes
Blue between the dank and songless trees;
And on the ground are mats of tarnished leaves.
On every rotting log
A pixy glade of mosses;
Lichens arrayed
In muted pinks and green,
Fungus
Brown-lobed and saffron clasp
Old stumps, gleam
Pale as corals from the fissured bark.

—*Girsha Gowing*

INDIAN WOMEN IN WAR MAIDEN

It is the sad ones who make the songs,
And the happy ones who sing them.

Now that you are gone and will be long returning,
I walk the trail of the deep shadows;
To the willows that weep by the dark waters I go
And mourn there with the troubled.

Until your return to me as when you left me,
I shall live in my song that tells me
Of the day of your coming.
And then I will sing you my heart-song
I heard in the shadows.
There in the moan of the willows.

For the happy ones, who once have been sad,
Will find in their hearts more to be sung of.

MOTHER

Why are you weeping, Mother?
Our warriors are riding home from the battle,
And the people are singing and dancing.
You can see the scalp the braves are lifting.
An enemy's scalp into our Mootchekees!

Always some of the horses carry no riders,
Where do they go, Mother? The riders?
Did I have a father who rode with the brave ones?
Mother, why are you sobbing
When our village is loud with the singing!

Dry your eyes, Mother. I will ride to the battles
And come again to you with the warriors.
I will bring the scalp for the dance at the bonfires.
Then you can be proud and sing with the people;
When you see me lifting the scalp with the riders.

Mother, why do you weep?

GRANDMOTHER

Too long now, oh, how long!
Our menfolk have gone with the strung bow,
Wary of Death.

Our young men and the hunters wary of warriors,
Seeking revenge for a perfidy,
Follow the trails with the strung bow
Retaliating.

Oh, to lose among the ash heaps, as a broken pitcher,
These ancient grudges coming down from our fathers,
So we may go with our menfolk
With our hunters to the ranges in safety.

So we may ride the width of prairies
And travel the trails of our rivers and long valleys
In safety;
With the bow-string unstrung!

—*Frank Wallace*

THEY ARE NOT LOST

(To the memory of our missing Airmen)

They are not lost who lately rode the skies
And breathed the wine of morning, cool and sweet;
Blue seas uncharted, challenging their eyes,
While clouds translucent touched their wingèd feet.
They are not lost whose eager hearts have leapt
To the tumult of winds; to the rush of the wanton rain,—
And in far moonlit silences have swept
Through fields of evening sown with silver grain.

Now have they fared to far untrespasted shores,
Where the last echo of wars' thunder dies;
They are shorn of death as their shining craft outsoars
The journeying moon and the stars' hushed sanctities.
Not unaccompanied shall they linger there

Nor roam the outer dark. Still are they one
With all the swift-winged galleons that dare
Far paths beyond the tempest to the sun.

O valiant ones who lately rode the sky
And challenged death above the distant sphere,
Behold across the night's immensity
The transient hours of darkness disappear.
Behold the radiance of the ascending day,—
Knowing the shadows which so long have lain
Upon the ravaged earth, shall fade away,
And the proud isle be beautiful again!

—*Irene Chapman Benson*

FANTASTIQUE

I will take the winding path through the dark woods,
And follow as far as any man may dare,
Until I find a green glen set about with yellow buds,
And I will take and set a mirror there,

A mirror of bright metal, as gay as sin,
New-polished, gleaming in the sun like fire;
Magic, so that a girl, looking therein,
May see all the vision of her heart's desire.

And lo! a unicorn with cold, strange eyes
Shall come in answer to the silver glance,
And pause, held captive by his own surprise,
Bound by the mystery of his own countenance.

The white mane, the horn gleaming like mother-of-pearl,
The cold eyes, the polished hoofs—he will stand and gaze,
Rapt in his image like a proud fair girl,
Nor know how moments turn to hours and to days.

And I shall send a young girl to lead him by three
Frail shining things—a silken thread, a gold cord, a silver chain
of a single strand,

And the wild, proud thing shall follow her back to me
Unresisting, the unbitted mouth nuzzling her hand.

She will lead him through the streets, and the people will say
Of me, look, it is taken, see what his magic has done;
But I shall be careless, and leave the taming of the beast for
another day,
And turn back to thinking of other impossible things to be won.

—Robert D. Harris

RETURN FROM BEDLAM

She has returned from a place more strange
Than nightmare.
People with faces lacking names
And names — faces.
There are days . . . blurred . . .
Dropped into limbo—
And two years lost out of her life
As if they were stillborn.

“Let’s not *speak* of the “shock treatments”.
I don’t like to think about them.
If I’d known where I was,
I’d have REALLY gone mad.
But I’m all right, now . . .
If I could just REMEMBER . . .”

(To hear people talking around you
About things you said . . . or did . . .
But can’t BELIEVE you did
Because it’s all GONE . . .
Wiped out . . .
BLANK!)—

O God, be very good to her.
DON’T let her slip back
Into the shadows!

—Mona Gould

JOURNEY INTO DEATH

It was a long journey—a time of thirty years—
Before tenacious flesh released the soul;
And it was a short journey—four days of grief, of fears—
While his body fought to make the broken whole.

It was a dark journey, lit by no certain light,
For our hearts refused to sanction that escape;
He was too young to long for immaterial height,
For a climate formed to match the spirit's shape.

It was a bleak journey—the tangible beauty's strength
Hid by a mask of sudden, weary loss—
And it was a still journey, leading down at length
Into the old, old country of the cross.

—*Eleanor Glenn Wallis*

THIS THE BLOSSOMING

This is the blossoming hour of another spring,
The ghostly parade of memories across the moon's pale face . . .
Too thin the fragile purple discs of violet web . . .
Too high the cherry tree's wild song of yearning . . .
Too soon the eagerness of the year's green valley . . .
For the heart to hear.

This is the turning of a newer page,
The passing glory of small shadows against the sun . . .
Too far the golden veil of the sunset scarf . . .
Too large the sky's dark dome of indigo . . .
Too small the thread of a star's bright silver . . .
For the heart to see.

But these, the passing moments on the day's dark face,
Shall bring each flowering fragment of the wind . . .
Enough the frail white pageant of the plum . . .
Enough the moon's bright path across the lake . . .
Enough the earth's cool crying in the night . . .
For the heart to know.

—*Edythe Hope Genee*

ANCHORAGE

This is no lonely house but my heart's haven.
Here stilled and at anchor is the ship of my life
Between day's toil on the deep and next dawn's waking,
In the hours between the hours of the earning of bread.
I am cliffed about with walls of infinite patience;
Now am I sheltered from storm with the understanding
Of words once whispered or spoken, of laughter once bright
In these rooms. The floors gently accept my weariness
As dark harbour waters cushion adventure-tired keels;
And, rich of breath, always ready to enfold me,
Is memory with its gathering arms and consolations
Like night bending over the furled sails of my solitude.

—*Reba Hudson*

ALTAR

The acolyte stood for a moment there,
And seemed too innocent to need
The peace of a religion's creed:
Too young to have a pain for God to share.

The acolyte stood for a moment there,
With a pathetic, youthful grace.
And then he turned his childish face,
And in a sudden movement knelt in prayer.

—*David Earle Lewis*

CHRISTMAS EVE

Silent and holy sleeps the earth tonight
With soft white blanket clinging close and warm;
The luster of the heavenly candle light
Spreads like a halo o'er her lovely form,
And stillness settles her broad bed upon—
The holy hush that heralds Christmas dawn.

Disturb her slumbers not, O noisy men!
Shout not with selfish arrogance tonight!
Let guns be mute, and factories again
Their raucous voices still in this soft light;
That she may dream of that one Child she bore
Whose thoughts were Visions, and whose words were Lore.
—Kingsley Vogan

DAWN AT XOCHIMILCO

(The Floating Gardens of Mexico)

The mists of dawn caress us as we drift,
Our dim canoe a wraith—and from the past
Brave Montezuma's Aztecs slowly lift
Their living, pulsing spirits free at last
To chant wild morning paeans to the sun
And bid the pungent copal incense rise—
Faint garden perfumes through our senses run,
Tall swaying trees point upward to the skies.

Far purple mountains guard the sacred place.
Lo, o'er us steals a mellow golden light,
Effacing Mem'ries of that fallen race—,
The gray lagoons gleam out vermilion bright.
Our Eden thrills to lilting flute and fife—
The wattled rafts are lush with light and life.

—Jessie Hagerman

COULD I HAVE KNOWN

Could I but cast one sole censorious thought
From out the mould of memory or mind,
Summon one seed of censure, then were bought,
Though dearly, ease of heart to make me blind
To all idolatry of attribute
And excellence, that Love has taught.

Might I have known one act as merciless,
Then could I rouse contempt to bid to go
From consciousness your utter tenderness.

What provocation met with gentleness!
Even had it not been accepted so,
With justice I must mete it measureless.

One shortened shadow of one brutal part
Had hurled sweet hurt of dearness from this heart!
—*Dorothy Best*

HUNGER

Because my dim, short-visioned gaze was strained
To catch each facet of a worthless light
On my more worthless self, I had no sight
That dark day when you stood with thin face drained
Of joy and hope; when only pride remained
With arid speech and thought woe-clipped from flight.
How lonely must the empty hours of night
Have been to you for whom a world had waned!

As the blind cry for crusts, so I do now—
Blind in my heart and in my beggared soul—
One little crust for one who showed you how
To fast from love and life and break the bowl
Of shining faith. What can the starving say
Who starve because they threw a loaf away?

—*Gilean Douglas*

BEFORE BURIAL

This white hour is for you and me alone.
Your silence is not new nor strange, for we
Have often spent together wordlessly
The tenderest moments we have ever known.
But strange this ultimate tryst should find me so
Emotionless. Beloved, even now
The light of sunset falls upon your brow
For the last time. My darling, let me go

Before a panic seizes, overpowers—
Before a madness, shattering my will,
Bids me destroy myself or seek to kill
Those entering this room with tears and flowers.
Let me rush out forever from this place
Of flowers and tears—and your unanswering face.

—*Inez Barclay Kirby*

THE PLANTER OF TREES

I watched him labour in the pride of May,
Setting with anxious care each tiny thread
Of fibrous root, and then, with gentle tread,
Pressing about each stem the fertile clay;
A gaunt and spare old man with hair gone grey;
His manhood's supple vigor long since fled;
Beside the fragile plants whose needs he fed
So tenderly he seemed more frail than they.
But when his work was done and light grew less,
Held by some dream of beauty yet to be,
He lingered on, with eyes that strove to bless
The task whose glory they would never see,
Yet caught some sight of unborn loveliness
Wherein he saw his immortality.

—*John E. Nixon*

THE HARPSICORD PLAYER

Like swallows flit her fingers on the keys;
Firm quills, responsive, pluck the chiming wires,
Swift shuttles weaving gracious melodies,
Sweet, frail, unvanquished wraiths of old desires
Of masters who, while linked in classic school,
(Scarlatti, Mozart, Handel of wide brow)
Wrought lightly within bounds of firm fixed rule.
Bright airs from a lost world, heard strangely now:
Gigues, sarabandes, gavottes and gay bourrees
Ring out; trills, mordaunts, dance upon the strings
With sprightly art which still has power to please
And waft us, for an hour, on shimmering wings . . .

The cadenced harmonies float, fade away
With brief-lived twilight of the winter day.

—*Florence Westacott*

THE HEART THAT KEEPS ITS YOUTH

I had learned much, but had forgotten more
Until a little child was sent to me
To take me by the hand, and merrily
Demand to see the things I loved before
I thought that life was tasteless to the core.
A child has taught me that there need not be
For any man, the hopeless agony
Of seeing only empty death in store.

These priceless pearls of knowledge of this truth,
My radiant lamp of joy dispelling night,
He brought them, though his baby hands were small.
Forever, for the heart that keeps its youth
The world has such abundance of delight
That life is far too brief to find it all.

—*H. Wakefield Maunsell*

THE UNKNOWN

Where do those strange uncharted regions lie,
Those unseen heights and valleys, verdure crowned,
That I have sought for long, yet never found
Beneath the wide environs of the sky?
Whence come these forces I cannot descry,
Urgent, unsought, fleeter than light or sound,
That lend an understanding most profound,
Yet brook no question nor vouchsafe reply?
Can they be far when love outspans the stream,
And minds sifts through the silences apart,
Winging a wordless message to my heart?
And whence these tides, whose sources none may trace,
That ebb and flow like music through my dream,
And lose themselves meanwhile in time and space?

—*Elizabeth Donaldson*

TO PETRARCH

(Crowned Altissimo Poeta, Rome, 1341)

What would you see in your proud land, Petrarch,
If you came back again to Italy,
And in the Gardens of the Medici
Could listen to the nightingale or lark
And dream of Laura in the fragrant dark?
Strange navies rule the Adriatic Sea,
And planes which roared above your Tuscany
Have bombed its storied towns and left their mark.

Yet Rome and Florence stand as they stood when
They saw the strife of Guelph and Ghibelline
And Dante in Verona wept apart.
The Colosseum watches now, as then,
Low crowded shores the Tiber flows between:
But there could be no sonnet in your heart.

—*Margaret Complin*

BOY AT THUNDER RIVER

With curly hair, blue shirt, and rough-shod feet,
He filled the cabin doorway, as the train
Crept slowly over the bridge and grimy heat
Teased at the passengers: the men in plain
Array, with heavy eyes and heads like cork;
Fellows with crumpled clothes and pimply faces;
Women whose idols were the knife and fork:
"If only I," he thought, "were going places!"
The train moved on. So did his wistful thought:
All day he travelled over land and ocean,
He rode the sky, and in some charming spot
He met a girl, with young, blue-eyed emotion.
Such gay adventure set his pulse a-quiver—
Till cowbells called him home to Thunder River.

BOY FROM THUNDER RIVER

Across the sea, midst bomb and bayonet,
A lonely lad is thinking of a stand
Of stately firs, and skies that hold no threat—
Just sparkling stars!—a quiet, quiet land
Where silver fish move silently in streams
That flow from peaceful snow on mountain tops
To where the placid cows, with tranquil dreams,
Sweeten their breath upon the clover crops.
Though once 'twas heaven to be going places,
His feet grew weary on the road to Rome.
Oh, he is tired!—tired of alien faces:
He longs for friends and simple joys at home,
Knowing the quiet, clean, bright hours deliver
The sweetest things in life—at Thunder River.

—Clara Hopper

DEFINITION

Death is only a night of slumber
On a lake pavilioned by the trees,
When sunset comes with her shades of umber,
And the pilgrim sun on bended knees.

Death is only an hour of sleeping
Where cat-tails nod by a drowsy stream;
Death is only a mother keeping
The long, long vigil . . . the transient dream.

Death is only the pale moon shining
On shadowed highways of no return;
Death is only the ivy twining
A ruined arch or a broken urn.

Death is only the long trail's ending
Where slopes the sun on his pilgrim way;
Death is a robe for the Master's mending
Till wheeling worlds in their course shall stay.

Alfred W. Purdy

ENGLAND—1940

Let us remember (she will not remind us
Who nourishes no wound by word or moan)
How, when a helpless world lay waste behind us,
Forsaken, staunch, magnificent, alone,
Sane amid wreckage, tears, and blood,
Then — England stood.

Let us remember—now when joy is burning
Swift as a catching flame throughout our land
For those from Hades' very gate returning
To speak, and smile again, and clasp our hand
They came to unscarred country, peace, and food,
For — England stood.

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PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF NOVA SCOTIA

HALIFAX N S

Let us remember, when the soothing story
Of quiet years has passed, and commonplace
Obscures with choking sands the heroic glory
Of that grim summer—let them not efface
The memory of that lonely fortitude,
When England stood.

Let us remember—yes, when politics
Raises its dusty head and seamy face,
And odd scums in its seething rise and mix,
Perhaps ill deeds (war breeds no angel race)
We're here today, to judge 'twixt ill and good,
For — England stood.

Let us remember—ours the forward vision
Of our unbounded skies and crystal light.
Let us keep true, when faced with each decision
To our new world and far, uncluttered sight,
But in our hearts a prayer of gratitude
That England stood.

—*Lees Wallace*

SOLILOQUY

This leaf, gyrating in the Autumn air,
Must come reluctantly to earth.
This blossom, thrusting at the early snow,
Will not rebuff a sterner storm.
The hopes which clung to changeless hours,
With tentacles of stem and vine,
The bright noon's filching from the store
Of summer's dwindling warmth,
Are frosted in the hardening earth.
Leaf, flower and stem, processional in grief,
Are parcel of that larger death,
The immolation of the sun.

—*Lettie Ann Hill*

ESCAPE

My room is very bare
for I am very poor
but pictures everywhere
I see on walls and door.

Yes, I am very poor
but richer far than some
for on soiled walls and door
my lovely pictures come.

Oh, richer far than some
for I have eyes to see
where lovely pictures come . . .
and no one sees but me.

For I have eyes to see
amid these fairy-lands
. . . and no one sees but me . . .
where my fine castle stands.

Amid my fairy-lands
close to a river's edge
round my fine castle stands
a tall dark cypress-hedge.

And by that river's edge
though I am very poor,
through that dark cypress-hedge
I find a fairy-door. —*Elizabeth Morgan-Jones*

ENCHANTMENT

In the lost land of Faery
Where waiting dreams lie deep
The days drift by unnumbered
The nights no vigils keep
And the slow hours move softly
Down sunlit lanes of sleep.

Peace dwells in every valley
And quiet crowns each hill
The river flows unrippled
The shadowed pools are still
Guarding an unguessed secret
Hidden by wizard skill

No breeze moves in the branches
No slightest sound is heard
The rushes by the river
Stand quiet and unstirred
Naught breaks the brooding silence
Save one lone singing bird

But oh the golden music
Too sweet for human ears
The wraiths of lovely summers
Long mourned with bitter tears
The beauty that has vanished
Lost in the mists of years

And he who stops to listen
To the strange sweet refrain
The sorrowful enchantment
The longing and the pain
For him time goes unheeded
He comes not home again

Charmed by the magic music
Forever he must stay
His soul drowned in pure rapture
Unheeding night or day
Bewitched by the wild singing
That steals his heart away.

—*B. H. Warr*

ENDEARMENT

For when you passed me by
A little breath of heaven came to me
—A breath so faint it scarcely stirred a tree
But was as if a sigh

Came on the nightwind stealing through the grass
As I stood poised to catch some whisper low,
—Then through the dimming light I saw you pass
Fair as the afterglow

Of all the sunsets on a distant hill,
Of all the lily-bloom at Easter-tide,
—For of all loves that come one heart to fill
Yours only shall abide.
—*Mary Matheson*

REVIEWS OF POEMS

Tallahassee. By ANDREW MERKEL, *Halifax*: Imperial Publishing Co. 1945. 103 pp. \$2.00.

This is a lengthy "ballad of Nova Scotia," written in rime royal by a Halifax newspaper man. It tells with zest and not a little vigour the escape of the Confederate cruiser *Tallahassee* from a blockade at Halifax during the American Civil War; but the background of pre-Confederation politics in British North America is also sketched in with enthusiastic detail. It is somewhat unfortunate that the verse technique is left very much in the rough, with many scores of such false rhymes as held-field (p. 45), before-endure (p. 54), fires-rapiers (p. 57), port-comfort (p. 58, din-welkin (p. 63), redress-prowess (p. 64), stream-Queen (p. 67), besieged-engaged (p. 74), and find-send (p. 78).

True Harvest. By ARTHUR S. BOURINOT, *Toronto*: The Ryerson Press. 1945. 56 pp. \$2.50.

This is the seventeenth slender volume of verse by a 52-year-old Ottawa poet. The present reviewer must confess to a little

impatience at the atomized free verse of a poem like "Ariadne in Naxos", which trails through more than five pages with an average (p. 52) of less than three words to the line. (Catullus did the job much more effectively in strict hexameters.) On the other hand, a lyric like "Dark Flows the River" is exquisitely turned, both in pattern and in imagery, and the "Two Sonnets on Beauty" are both charming. It is a book to read and re-read.

The Task. By ROBERT BILAIN CAMPBELL, Toronto and New York: Farrar and Rinehartt, Inc. 1945. 88 pp. \$2.50.

This volume is worlds removed from William Cowper's sedate work with the same title. It is the ultra-modern verse of a semi-Communist Scotch-American, who died in 1940 at the age of twenty-nine. Typical of his more revolutionary mood is his own version of "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," in which he describes with grim satisfaction how a young Communist breaks into the well-guarded home of a millionaire and murders him with a can of TNT. As a deliberate travesty of Browning's original, this poem shows a deft mastery of traditional measures. More commonly, however, he throws normal prosody and intelligibility out of the window. By the test of being read over the radio to a listening public, a poem like "The Evening Car" would be at least ninety per cent. meaningless. That he had dynamic potentialities is clearly shown by a ballad like "Hizzoner," or by the masterly blank verse in "A Letter from the Airport." If tuberculosis had spared him for another ten years, he might have outgrown "the Kremlin's ray and redstar faith" (p. 30), by coming to realize the ruthless horrors of the Left and all the mockery of its propaganda. As it is, he remains an embittered and explosive product of the hungry thirties, denied by death the full ripening of his mind and his art.

Crushed for Better Wine. By SARA ROBBINS, New York. Philosophical Library. 1945. 72 pp. \$2.00

This volume, consisting of twenty rather diffuse poems in free verse, is of more significance as a devotional utterance than

as poetry. Religious truths, especially those having to do with enrichment of the spirit through suffering, are set forth in lines whose main affinities are with Scripture and with translations of Vedic philosophy. Pictists and theosophists may find their hearts warmed by its devout meditations and exhortations; but it bears little relationship to poetry as an art.

Songs of the Seasons. By ARTHUR C. NASH, Vancouver: Duns-muir Printing Co. 1944. 39 pp. Price not stated.

It is interesting to find the influence of Swinburne lingering faintly on beside the Western Ocean. In this sixth book of verse by Mr. Nash, singing anapaests dominate all of his lengthy odes to the seasons. This is not great poetry, and its inspiration is that of another day; but it is pleasant to see the unfailing competence with which the writer turns out his tuneful lines.

Sandstone and Other Poems. By ANNE MARRIOTT, Toronto: Ryerson Press. 1945. 42 pp. \$1.50.

Anne Marriott is one of the most gifted poets in Canada today. The present collected edition of her verse gives one an inescapable sense of her importance. Here is one who can be modern without being perverse and unintelligible. On the contrary, she searches tirelessly for words that will carry a maximum of vivid and inevitable meaning. Some 22 out of the 32 poems in this volume are in free verse, but these, as well as those in traditional forms, are given unfailing distinction by pregnant adjectives and verbs, and by the constant enrichment of tone-colour.

As for the mind that is expressed through this notable technique, Miss Marriott can be grimly realistic without losing faith in spiritual values. In "The Wind Our Enemy" and "Prairie Graveyard," the tragedy of human life is set forth without reservations; but she is not stampeded into the soulless conspiracy of the power-hungry Left, for she clings rather to a religious faith, the more precious because so difficult. "Answer" and "This the

Adventure" are two of the finest poems in the book, magnificently honest in their wrestlings of the spirit:

*The possible affirmation panted
Against the complacent, probable denial;
Betting the shrivelled life on the unprovable premise,
Throwing the laboured death as the final answer.*

No more significant volume of Canadian verse has been published in the past ten years.

The Saskatchewan Poetry Book, 1945-46. Regina: The Saskatchewan Poetry Society. 1945. 38 pp. Price not stated.

This chapbook contains 53 poems by 36 members of the Saskatchewan Poetry Society. Evidently the bald-headed prairie produces more crops than wheat. Few of the poems are without interest or merit. It may seem invidious to single any out for special mention, but I have enjoyed, amongst other things, the simple inevitability of Gwen Brierley's "Leaving School," the solemn "Eternal Moment" of Clara E. Hill, the unexpected anticlimax of L. C. Evans's "My Partner," and the imaginative thoughtfulness of Vesta Pickel's "The Carpenter's Dream."

Vancouver Island and Other Poems. By ANNIE IRNSIDE COWAN. Victoria: Privately printed. Undated. 15 pp. No stated price.

This little chapbook contains seven sonnets and six brief lyrics; and reveals a gentle and religious spirit.

This Hour. By MARGARET ELSOM. Published by the author, Box 302, Woodstock, Ont. 13 pp. Price not stated.

Little Things. By DOROTHY HARRINGTON. Published by the author, Freeport Sanatorium, Kitchener, Ont. 22 pp. 50 cents.

These are two privately issued chapbooks, containing 18 and 31 poems respectively, reprinted from Ontario newspapers. Their predominant spirit is cheerfulness and courage.

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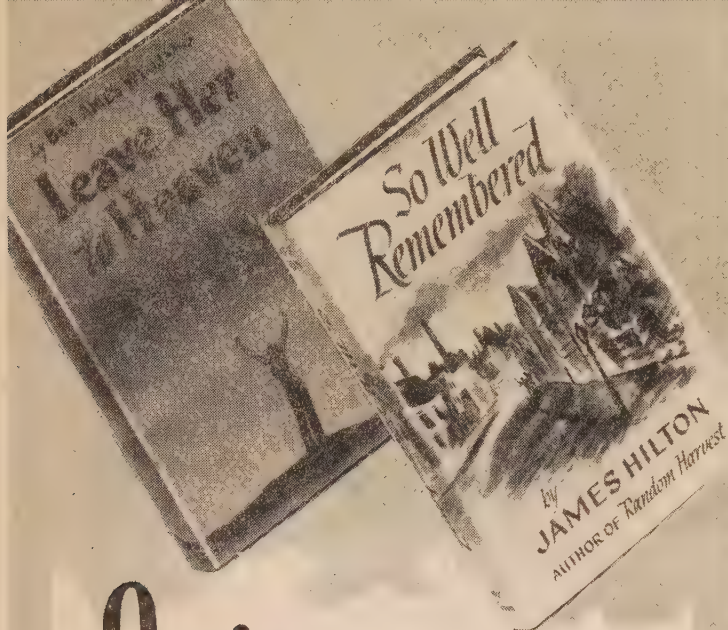
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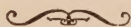
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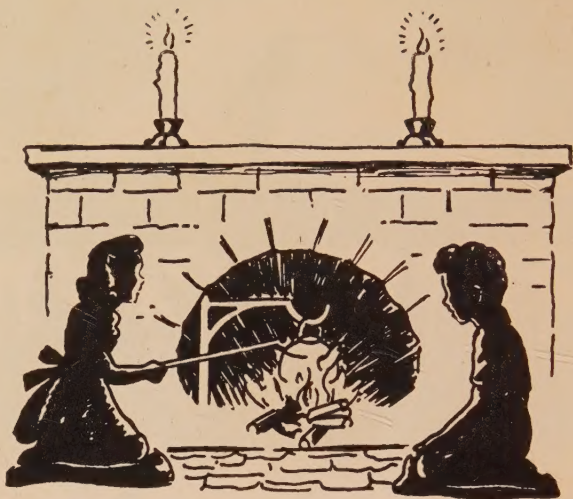
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